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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2051
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1930
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0890
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0895
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0603
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RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0446
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2509

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SUBJECT: SUSPECTED ULFA BOMB KILLS 5 IN ASSAM AND INJURES 70

¶1. (U) On Sunday June 29, suspected United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) militants triggered an explosion at the weekly market in Assam's Baksa district near the Bhutan border, killing five persons, including three women. About 70 persons were also injured from the blast. The bomb was planted on a bicycle. Immediately after the blast, Assam Police also defused another bomb planted in the same area. Although the ULFA have denied their involvement in the bombing to the media, the Assam Police suspect the handiwork of ULFA's "709 battalion," which along with Bodo militants, has a significant presence in the area. The explosion has occurred on the heels of the unilateral ceasefire declared on June 25 by the ULFA's 28th battalion 'A' and 'C' Companies (septel). In all, ULFA has seven battalions of varying size in Assam.

¶2. (SBU) Director General of Police of Assam R.N. Mathur informed Post that the bomb is likely the handiwork of ULFA's 709 battalion, which could also be a reflection of the groups frustration over the split that has surfaced with the 28th battalion's partial ceasefire. The Baksa area, inhabited predominately by Bodos and tea estate tribes, has been tense and the unified command of the Assam Police, the Central Paramilitary forces and the Army had already mounted increased patrols in the region.

¶3. (SBU) Assam Police sources informed Post that following the blast, security arrangements have been beefed-up further in the area and also along the entire stretch of the Indo-Bhutan border in the district. Media sources added that as a result of the blast, which claimed the lives of five tea-tribe laborers, organization like the All Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (AATTSA), have urged the Assam government to provide enhanced security in all the tea tribes-dominated areas. General Secretary of AATTSA P. L. Das told the press that "Already the tea industry is languishing and its workers are facing enormous problem, and such ruthless attacks would aggravate the scenario in Assam."

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The suspicion that this recent bomb attack has been orchestrated by the ULFA militants of the 709 battalion indicates that not all of ULFA's units have accepted the ceasefire with the Assam government. ULFA has informed the Assam government that their demand for "sovereignty" persists regardless of the unilateral ceasefire by some of its units on June 25. The fragmentation of ULFA means that ethnic violence will continue in Assam even as positive results have been achieved in bringing some militants to the peace table.

JARDINE